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Author(s):ROSS WOODMAN.
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I. Apocalyptic Fury in The Triumph of Life and Adonais

IN "SHELLEY DISFIGURED" PAUL DE MAN EXPLORES THE DELUSION OF figuration as the "erasure" of what de Man describes as the nonphenomenal "positing power of language" (64).(1) Figuration, he argues, is "the madness of words" (68) that, by its false metaphysical assumption of meaning, erases the "senselessness" of language's "positing power" ("Be"), a power that acts randomly and autonomously prior to any human signification so that its mindless flat "Be" is entirely independent of "It Is" (or "We are"). Unlike the Biblical Logos or Word as the divine and absolute creator of all that is ("Be" and "It Is") that bestows a divine or symbolic meaning upon all that is, the mindless "positing power of language" ceaselessly erases whatever it posits in its blind act of positing. Implicit, if not explicit, in this "positing power" is Nietzsche's death of God that abandons the world to fiction and, as fiction, must no longer wear the disguise of truth. Fiction masquerading as truth is "madness." The "triumph of life" is a masquerade in which the poet's enslavement to figuration appears as "the just similitude / Of a triumphal pageant" (The Triumph of Life 117-18) from which in Shelley's final fragment both the Shelley and Rousseau figures seek release, a release that can only come through some final defacement, conveniently offered to de Man in the "defaced body" of Shelley "present in the margin of the last manuscript page" (67).

"How," de Man asks,

> can this positional act, which relates to nothing that comes before or after, become inscribed in a sequential narrative? How does a speech act become a trope, a catachresis which then engenders in its turn the narrative sequence of an allegory? (64)

Unlike the questions posed in the text of The Triumph of Life that spring forth as if, like the sun of the opening stanza, they were "hastening to [their] task / Of glory and of good" (1-2) when in fact they are hastening to their own extinction, de Man, in answering his questions, is constructing "the narrative sequence of an allegory" of reading that renders meaning or comprehension problematic because, as David L.

Clark explains, "[l]anguage's denegation [hidden for de Man by the "madness of words"] possesses the eventlike character of an accident that suddenly and irrevocably interrupts life: unpredictable, unmotivated, prosaically indifferent to human desire."(2) "It can only be," de Man replies to his own question, "because we impose, in our turn, on the senseless power of positional language the authority of sense and of meaning" (64). This "authority" resides in figuration and, for de Man, all figuration is, as figuration, mad. An allegory of reading understood as making sense of madness without "attributing value to it," he further boldly suggests, "may be a Verneinung, an intended exorcism" (68) of" [l]anguage's denegation" and of"the madness of words" (68).

De Man in his essay is constructing in the presence of "madness" an exorcizing, rational dialogue with himself very different from the dialogue between Shelley and Rousseau in The Triumph of Life. Through question repeating question to no end, the latter dialogue keeps canceling itself out much in the manner of the "great stream / Of people" in the narrator's "strange trance" (29) within which he "sate beside a public way" watching it, not as an "actor" (306) in it, but as a "spectator" (305) of it. The "stream" that the narrator observes is a metaphor (within an already operative metaphor) of questions repeating themselves as variations of the single question with which the fragment breaks off: "`Then, what is Life?' I said" (544). Rousseau tries to answer it, thinks he may partly know, becomes confused, and then forgets what he may have started to say. "Whence camest thou, and whither goest thou?" the Shelley figure asks the shade of Rousseau:

"How did thy course begin," I said, "and why?"

> "Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
> Of people, and my heart of one sad thought,
> --Speak."

To which the shade of Rousseau answers:

> "Whence I came, partly I seem to know,
>
> "And how and by what paths I have been brought
> To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;
> Why this should be my mind can compass not;
>
> "Whither the conqueror hurries me still less."
> (296-304)

De Man's position as the reader of Shelley's text interrogating his own reading is constructing an allegory of reading. He thereby recreates and amplifies this figure of the narrator (as partially distinct from the poet Shelley) in Shelley's fragment. The result is a completed fragment which de Man's narration provides. He knows the "how and by what paths" the shade of Rousseau has been brought to "this dread pass." It is the "how" and "why" of being controlled by the "conqueror" which is "the positing power of language." More than that, he knows where the conqueror is

hurrying him. He is hurrying him to death. This completion that makes the fragment a [w]hole into which the fragment disappears as if into itself resides in de Man's self-conscious reading of his reading of the narrator's "strange trance," a trance which the narrator in the fragment, as distinct from the narrator in de Man, considers a "trance of wondrous thought" (44), though, at the same time, the "wondrous thought" consists of "thoughts that must remain untold" (20). What for the poet as poet "must remain untold" de Man, as reader interrogating his own reading (in dialogue with himself), tells. He disfigures the "wondrous."

Because the poet's thoughts "must [by Shelley's narrator figure] remain untold," the Shelley figure within the fragment turns to Rousseau to explain the narrator's "trance." He turns, that is, from one poet to another poet whose influence on him as a poet is so pervasive that what, prior to the "strange trance," was the hillside on which he stretched his "faint limbs beneath the hoary stem" of"an old chestnut" on "grass which methought hung so wide / And white" becomes in the trance the decayed and still decaying corpse of Rousseau, and yet not quite a corpse, rather a living corpse such as Mary Shelley saw in her "waking dream" as it became the inspiration of her novel, Frankenstein. He sees the "shade" or "shadow" or "phantom" of Rousseau, while at the same time he sees through it to the landscape on which he is stretched out, though now the landscape glimmers as through a "veil of light" (24-40). The Rousseau whom he "sees" as it is figuratively inscribed on his brain is not unlike what he sees in the "stream" that flows like "one mighty torrent" (53):

> And others as with steps towards the tomb
> Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
> And others mournfully within the gloom
>
> Of their own shadow walked, and called it death ...
> And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
> Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.
>
> But more with motions which each other crost
> Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw
> Or birds within the noonday ether lost.
>
> (56-64)

What de Man sees in all this is the mindless stream of language whose enigmatic positing power, devoid of consciousness, posits only its own thoughtless action: "motions which each other crost" in pursuing or shunning shadows. When, therefore, de Man argues that the "signifying power of language" is more like "the power of death" (69) than of life, he is already radically reformulating the repeated question with which Shelley's fragment breaks off. "Then what is language?" de Man consistently asks, stopping, however, to give his answer that folds the poem back into its meaning, which the fragment of itself cannot supply.

For de Man, the fragment remains a fragment because it asks the wrong question of

itself. If it had asked the right question ("Then what is language?"), the answer would have been provided, for the answer is there in the way that, for de Man, the "positing power of language" works in the poem. The narrator's "thoughts that must remain untold" are thoughts which the living corpse of Rousseau also cannot tell because, like the narrator and like the Shelley figure, it is still in some sense "living," still refusing to face and enter its own death as the "positing power of language." The only one who can tell these thoughts is, de Man demonstrates, the "defaced body" (66) of Shelley, "burned after his boat capsized and he drowned off the coast of Lerici." This "defaced body," of course, cannot tell them unless, following the drowning and the burning, he can be given what de Man calls "a represented or articulated meaning" (67). For that to occur, he must be refigured or mediated. The dead Shelley, now that he is dead in a way that neither he nor Rousseau nor the narrator are dead in the fragment, must speak with the power of death, which is, according to de Man, "the positing power of language."(3) In "Shelley Disfigured," de Man becomes the voice of the dead Shelley speaking the thoughts that in The Triumph of Life "must remain untold." De Man's function, as the voice of the dead, is to make present (as a seance makes present(4)) the "defaced body" of Shelley "in the margin of the last manuscript page" so that it becomes "an inseparable part of the poem" (67). As the voice of the dead Shelley, de Man becomes in his essay "the decisive textual articulation" of Shelley's otherwise unarticulated text. More than that, as the voice of the dead, de Man becomes the decisive textual articulator of "all texts" because "all texts," like Shelley's fragment, bear what de Man calls "the [hidden] wound of a fracture" (67). By exposing the killing wound, not so as to heal it, de Man embraces what Shelley calls poetry's "cold mortality" (486) which becomes in Adonais the trampling to fragments of the "dome of many-coloured glass" (462), a "false and fragile glass" which, Rousseau's shade declares, "stained that within which [he] still disdains to wear" (205).

De Man in "Shelley Disfigured" reads, by indirection, the "dome of many-coloured glass" that in Adonais "stains the white radiance of Eternity" in terms of Iris's "many-coloured scarf" (357) in The Triumph of Life, a reading, he explains, "of which it could be said that it wrenches the final statement of Adonais into a different shape" (55). But does it? De Man's supposed wrenching makes Shelley's "dome" what, with reference to Iris's scarf, he calls the false "glitter" that is figuration, a "glitter" that the "positing [and disfiguring] power of language" removes. In this sense, I suggest, de Man's reading of his reading of The Triumph of Life can be further read (as a reading of de Man's reading of reading) as a slow-motion, carefully analyzed account of the way in which "the [`non-phenomenal'] positing power of language" as the "power of death" tramples "to fragments" Shelley's "dome." Unlike The Triumph of Life, Shelley, under the dubious influence of his muse, Urania, has in Adonais carefully constructed his dome by, among other things, manipulating a set of images, in a manner beautifully described by Earl Wasserman, by relocating them in a series of opposing contexts: the contexts of matter, of cyclic renewal, and of pure spirit or mind.(5) This final context in which "the One remains, the many change and pass" (460) is the context in which Shelley tramples to fragments what he has carefully

constructed and has been deconstructing all along, without, however, himself fully inhabiting the consciousness that is this radical disfiguration within figuration. Like the shade of Rousseau in The Triumph of Life who hoped finally to be taught by Shelley more than he, Rousseau, had taught him, the figuration of Shelley's death by drowning as his "spirit's bark" driven "far from the shore, far from the trembling throng / Whose sails were never to the tempest given" (488-90) remains from beginning to end dark and fearful, perhaps all the more so as it comes finally into intense focus. Shelley in Adonais is being "born[e]" by language "darkly, fearfully afar." How darkly and how fearfully and how far gradually unfolds as the poem progresses in its process of what Wasserman, ignoring the "deadly Apollo" that de Man finds in figuration, calls "progressive revelation."(6) The "stain" that still clings to the shade of Rousseau still clings to Shelley, though he, like the shade of Rousseau, increasingly "disdains to wear it." Joining Keats, who feared the horror of the death that Shelley wrongly diagnosed in his Preface, Shelley in some lingering sense remains bound to his "dome." In this dark Apollonian sense (the "shape all light" in The Triumph of Life is de Man's "deadly Apollo" [64]), Shelley hesitated consciously to recognize the disfigurement in what he had so carefully wrought as what he called the "least imperfect," most "highly wrought" of his poems ("orphans"). And yet all the signs of disfiguration are there without, however, a conscious awareness of the mindless "positing power of language" that is controlling the disfiguring.

Initially in the poem Shelley describes his muse, Urania, inhabiting her deceptive paradise where, "with veiled eyes, / Mid listening Echoes," she sits,

> while one with soft enamoured breath,
> Rekindled all the fading melodies [of Keats]
> With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
> He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.
>
> (13-18)

Urania's deceptive paradise resides partly in the fact that it is a place of"listening Echoes," Asia's "Sea profound, of ever-spreading sound" (Prometheus Unbound 2.5.84), the "secret Paradise" of an infinite number of possible sounds combining, dissolving, recombining (mindlessly(7) for de Man) as what Shelley calls in his Defence "the chaos of a cyclic poem" (482) that contains within it as its highest conceivable potential what he calls "that great poem, which all poets, like the cooperating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world" (492). The problem with this "chaos" as with "that great poem," a problem that Shelley calls "the burthen of the curse of Babel" (484), is that it comes down to the particular poem which must, like de Man's "positing power of language," spring forth out of "chaos" as if it were what Coleridge calls, with reference to Wordsworth's poetry, "the first creative flat" (Biographia Literaria 1.80). And yet, when and if it does thus spring forth, the question becomes: can it maintain its precarious identity rather than become re-absorbed into the chimerical "chaos" from which it emerged?

Urania, "mid listening Echoes" is presumably able to pick out Keats's "fading melodies," though she probably does not distinguish between Keats and the "one" who now in Shelley's elegy is rekindling them. In the "glimmer" of her paradise, this much is as clear as poetry will allow: Shelley's narrator figure in The Triumph of Life is, in his "trance of wondrous thought" that "[un]rolled" on his "brain," able to pick out the shade of Rousseau as "[o]ne of the million leaves of summer's bier" (51). Those "million leaves" marking the death of summer are a figure for poetry, as are the dancing "feet" of Iris ("measure") trampling thought to extinction, or, again, the "fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to a transitory brightness" (Defence 504).

Figuration, de Man argues, hides the "bulk of death" that is forever "coming" in those "interruptions" that announce the "positing power of language." Shelley is initially anxious to arouse Urania from her "waking dream" to a painful recognition of the fact that Keats's "fading melodies" (above all the Odes, which Shelley with his own "enamoured breath" rekindles in his elegy) now contain his corpse, even as, for de Man, The Triumph of Life contains Shelley's corpse. The relocation of Keats's corpse in his poetry disfigures what was adorned and hidden even as Shelley's corpse disfigures Shelley. No sooner, however, does he call upon her, as his muse (and mother), to wake ("Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!") than he, not surprisingly, hesitates, reconsiders, changes his mind:

> Yet, wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
> Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
> Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep.
>
> (21-24)

Shelley in his elegy is unprepared to confront the "faceless body" of Keats that is the literal "bulk of death." Though the "eternal Hunger sits" waiting to devour the corpse of Keats, though "at the door / Invisible Corruption waits to trace / His extreme way to her dim dwelling place," neither "Hunger" nor "Corruption" in Shelley's elegy "dares ... to deface / So fair a prey" (66-71) as they will deface Rousseau and Shelley in The Triumph of Life.

When at last in stanza 23 Urania does awaken, she departs from her "secret Paradise" (208) as the very incarnation of de Man's "positing [and disfiguring] power of language" that leaves figuration a corpse:

> She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
> Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
> The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
> Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
> Had left the Earth a corpse.
>
> (199-202)

Urania rising is like the "shape all light" [353] (de Man's figure for all figuration

under the control of disfiguration), rising like the sun in The Triumph of Life:

"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them, and soon

"All that was seemed as if it had been not,
As if the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers, and she, thought by thought,

"Trampled its fires into the dust of death,
As Day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

"Of darkness reillumines even the least
Of heaven's living eyes....

(382-92)

Rousseau is not waving, but drowning, in a "Sea-profound, of ever-spreading sound," a "sound which all who hear must needs forget / All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love" (318-19).

Arriving at the corpse of Keats, Urania manages for an erotic moment to animate his corpse as if she were a female version of Mary Shelley's "modern Prometheus," Victor Frankenstein. Kissing the corpse ("Kiss me so long but as a kiss may live"), breath revisited his lips and "life's pale light / Flashed through [his] limbs, so late her dear delight." What arises to return her embrace, however, is not Keats but aroused Death who "smiled, and met her vain caress" (220-25). Figuration as the "death" that is the "triumph of life" is here fully figured as a complete disfigurement.

Not surprisingly, by the time Urania turns from Keats to Shelley, the poet can scarcely write. It is as if his own fires are being "trampled ... into the dust of death." He emerges as a "phantom among men; companionless / As the last cloud of an expiring storm," a figure that in the final movement will, as "the last clouds of cold mortality" consumed by "the fire for which all thirst," announce Shelley's death. So conflicted is his disguise (Dionysus, Actaeon, Christ, Cain) that Urania cannot recognize him. She "scanned," writes Shelley, anticipating the Shelley figure scanning the "phantom" of Rousseau in The Triumph of Life, "[t]he Stranger's mien, and murmured: "who art thou?" "He answered not," the lines continue,

but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's--Oh! that it should be so!

(303-6)

The figure of Cain appears in Adonais in the form of a refrain cursing those who slay

poets, which is to say, slay figuration. Shelley as himself the language recipient of this curse is left so weak that the "Power" which propels composition

> can scarce uplift
> The weight of the superincumbent hour;
> It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
> A breaking billow;--even whilst we speak
> Is it not broken? On the withering flower
> The killing sun [the "deadly Apollo"] smiles brightly ...
>
> (282-87)

"[A]bsolutely incomprehensible," wrote Ferdinand de Saussure ("On a Torn, Undated Page") "if I were not forced to confess that I suffer from a morbid horror of the pen, and that this work is for me an experience of sheer torture, quite out of proportion to its relative unimportance."(8)

That Shelley's muse in Adonais is not Urania but Death becomes increasingly evident. The "dome" that he is constructing is his own "well-wrought urn." Turning, as Keats was forced to do, from Urania to Death (Moneta in The Fall of Hyperion is "deathwards progressing / To no death" [I.259-60]), he, like Keats, remains with Death only "half in love." Though still by figuration chained, like Urania, to time, he is also aware that Urania, while grotesquely trying to restore Keats to her "secret Paradise," would "give all that I am to be as thou now art" (234). Like the shade of Rousseau and the figure of Shelley in The Triumph of Life, desire still "stain[s]" the poet, however much he disdains to wear it. "Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?" the poet asks, even as the shade of Rousseau asks, knowing it was "overcome / By my own heart alone, which neither age / Nor tears nor infamy nor now the tomb / Could temper to its object" (260-63). "Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here / They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!" (471-72), Death beckons Shelley.

In the poem's final lines, Hesperus, the evening star, beckons to him. Nearly a year later in The Triumph of Life, his "faint limbs" are still stretched out beneath it as the starry "cone of night" (23) while he continues to brood on those thoughts that still "must remain untold." The evening star that beacons Shelley to the "abode where the Eternal are" (495) in Adonais remains a beacon that he darkly fears to follow. In his Greek epigram attributed to Plato that serves as a prefix to Adonais, the poet as "morning star among the living" once dead gives, as Hesperus, "new splendour to the dead." Returning to the Greek epigram (in Shelley's translation) in The Triumph of Life, Shelley associates Hesperus with Plato's homosexual love of the lovely youth Astar, which, in Greek, means both star and flower. Rather than giving to Plato "new splendour," Astar "ruled" the "doom" of "all that is mortal of great Plato" (254). As for Astar as flower, Shelley in Adonais is the "withering flower" on which the "killing sun smiles brightly." "[W]hat still is dear," language writes, "Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither" (473-74). Rousseau's heart, like Plato's, was "conquered" by love, and, like Plato, all that is mortal of Rousseau must still expiate that conquest, a

conquest to which Plato's master, Socrates, never submitted, he, like Christ, as soon as he had "touched the world with living flame," fleeing back like an eagle to his "native noon" (130-31). The Shelley figure as "spectator" rather than "actor or victim in this wretchedness," it would appear, has still some expiation to do before he can attain his "native noon." Death, as understood by Shelley, is not easy. Release from one's mortal nature, as Plato and Rousseau demonstrate, demands some ultimate expiation which may require countless centuries of "Soul-making," or may never be achieved at all. The ultimate danger for the poet is the trap of figuration, the poet "consumed by that which [he] was nourished by."

In the very midst of an "untold" brooding such as this, the apocalyptic process of trampling to fragments everything he had ever written swiftly overpowers him like a "deadly Apollo" with a fury that is the "meaning" of everything he has ever written: his own drowned and burned "faceless body." "The Triumph of Life," de Man concludes, "can be said to reduce all of Shelley's previous work to nought" (66). The phrase "can be said" is carefully chosen. De Man is not the sayer; the sayer is the "positing power of language" positing itself.

In what follows, I shall argue that this apocalyptic fury described by de Man as the mindless "positing power of language" is, for Shelley, a judgment upon his "previous work" that, as the grace that fully releases Shakespeare's Prospero, allowing him to die, releases Shelley to die. Language's categorical imperative to Shelley is "Die / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!" (464-65). "Life" for Shelley is the slow process of dying as that dying is inherent in language itself. So long as the process is incomplete "life" continues, its continuing as an end in itself becoming a perverse Roman triumph in which the conquerors display their captured slaves. "I arose aghast," writes Shelley of his inner state projected as a "waking dream,"

> Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
> And saw like clouds upon the thunder blast
>
> The million with fierce song and maniac dance
> Raging around; such seemed the jubilee
> As when to greet some conqueror's advance
>
> Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
> From senatehouse and prison and theatre
> When Freedom left those who upon the free
>
> Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.
>
> (107-15)

2. Figuration as Incarnation in The Triumph of Life and Prometheus Unbound

Life, falsely figured, itself a tautology since all figuration is false, must, de Man argues, be disfigured by language itself, disfigurement being the imperative of

language's positing power if it is to posit itself. What remains as figure, as false, is the corpse of a disfigured figure, Shelley disfigured, a "defaced body" that as shade, shadow, phantom constitutes all the figures in The Triumph of Life understood as a Roman triumph. All of them, countless millions, declares the dreamer reading his "waking dream," are, as dream figures, nothing more than images reflected in a "false and fragile glass" upon which the dreamer throws or projects his own shadow. Readers, unless fully "awakened from the dream of life" (Adonais 344), do the same thing. They throw or project their own shadow onto what is already the poet's shadow. This projection is, for Shelley, what reading normally is, including his own reading of other poets. In The Triumph of Life, Shelley as "[a]ctor or victim in this wretchedness" (306), is becoming the "spectator" of his action as a poet. Having made the initial move of separating the spectator from the actor in himself as poet, he is in a position to withdraw the projection, a withdrawal that allows the spectator to judge the actor, much as Shelley judges his own poetry in the final movement of Adonais. Writing as "mad trance" assumes a state of otherness of which he is the increasingly negative spectator. The doubleness that results is described by de Man as "the agonistic pathos of dialectical battle," a "pathos" that he rightly recognizes as absent in The Triumph of Life where "dialectical battle" has, by "the sheer power of utterance," been cancelled by its decree, the "previous occupants of the narrative" (63) replaced by simple expulsion. "In the vocabulary of the poem," he writes, "it occurs by imposition (1.20)" (63). In Adonais, this expulsion takes place far more dialectically in the removal of a series of mythical masks (Adonis, Actaeon, Dionysus, Christ, Cain) by which Shelley sheds a series of mythopoeic disguises without, however, expelling mythopoeia itself in the guise of Adonai, the God who transcends his creation and whom Shelley will finally call "the One." Rather than simply canceling "the many" that "change and pass," "the One," for Shelley, sublates it into itself.

As early as Alastor, "Vision" that unrolls on the poet's "brain" ("And then that Vision on my brain was rolled" [The Triumph of Life 40]) rolls "back its impulse" so that the brain becomes "vacant" ("Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain" [Alastor 191]). "Reading as disfiguration" (69) is, for de Man, the rolling back of what as impulses is unrolling on the brain to confront the poet with "vacancy" (Mont Blanc 144). Mind, presumably, is the consciousness of this mindless process, a consciousness that clearly belongs to de Man and a consciousness that he equally ascribes to Shelley in The Triumph of Life. Any meaning or value superimposed upon this mindless and negating process which de Man attributes to the "positing power of language" is a "monumentalization" of what as language happens "only as a random event whose power, like the power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence" (69). The monument that the mind constructs out of the canceling impulses of the brain therefore contradicts the "randomness of its occurrence," a contradiction (de Man's "wound of a fracture" [67]) with which we must live so long as we do live. To live constructively (as distinct from creatively) with this "wound of a fracture" is to deconstruct the monuments of figuration by dealing with the seductive "madness of words" as madness. Deconstruction thus awakens in de Man the "suspicion" that

deconstruction "is a Verneinung, an intended exorcism" (68) that uses "the madness of words" to release us from it. Release as pure consciousness, the mind consciously inhabiting its own releasing power as its conscious positing of it that Shelley calls the "one mind" (On Life 478), constitutes an understanding of release that reaches well beyond what de Man calls "an unbearable condition of indetermination" (51) that Shelley inhabited as an exorcist casting "spells." "O for Medea's wondrous alchemy" (672), Shelley's narrator in Alastor cries, knowing that it is not "the true law / Of this so lovely world" (685-86). "Medea's wondrous alchemy" was a magic potion to rejuvenate the dying Aeson. In identifying prosopopeia with magic, with Urania's attempted re-animation of the dead Keats, he at the same time recognizes that it is, as spell, not "the true law / Of this so lovely world." De Man also knew it, though he believed there was no alternative, "[n]o degree of knowledge" being able "to stop this madness" (68). Shelley believed there was: the knowledge of death.

> "Whence are we, and why are we?" the poet in Adonais asks:
> of what scene
> The actors or spectators? Great and mean
> Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
>
> (183-85)

In The Triumph of Life, "great and mean," except the "sacred few," meet "massed in death," though, as shades, phantoms, shadows, they do not know that they are dead, the shades, phantoms, shadows being whatever, clinging to the "contagion of the world's slow stain," refuse to die, refuse, that is, to recognize that life is borrowed from death and must finally, as what is "lent," be returned to death. To know this, which is to endow death with all that is knowable about life, is to identify death not with extinction but with pure consciousness. The what is going on here to the knowledge of which Shelley dedicated his powers is death not as other than life but as life itself. Keats's Apollo dying into life is not a fragment suddenly breaking off, but life beginning as the consciousness of what it is. It is the absolute interruption that scatters all delusion, leading Prospero to drown his book or Shelley finally to fold it. "I consider the fragment of Hyperion, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years," Shelley wrote in his Preface to Adonais, originally intending to attach an essay on it to the publication of his elegy.

With Adonais specifically in mind, de Man in "Shelley Disfigured" not surprisingly identifies this notion of death as pure consciousness with Wordsworth's use of the platonic and neo-platonic myth of pre-existence in his "Immortality Ode," a myth that was clearly a part of Shelley's own platonic and neo-platonic readings, some of which he translated from the original Greek. His "apparent" use of this myth in Adonais, de Man argues, "has misled even the most attentive readers of The Triumph of Life" (50) who see it operative in his final poem. Shelley's use of the myth (and he does use it) is not, however, platonic. Shelley's pre-existence is neither other-worldly nor this-worldly; it is pure potentiality that cannot be imaged without falsifying its imagelessness.

"Who is the master of the slave?" Asia asks Demogorgon in Prometheus Unbound, having entered its cave of pure potentiality, which Panthea figures (as close to disfigurement as possible) as "a mighty Darkness / Filling the seat of power" (itself an "empty throne") where

> rays of gloom
> Dart round, as light from the meridian Sun,
> Ungazed upon and shapeless--neither limb
> Nor form--nor outline.
>
> (2.4.3-7)

"[Y]et we feel it is / A living spirit," Panthea adds as if to reassure herself. Unravelling the perverse constellations of master and slave that are legion was one of Shelley's ceaseless preoccupations that, so long as it occupied him, mired him in its revolving delusion, like the ever-whirling chariot of his final fragment that is driven by a four-faced, eye-banded charioteer "crouching within the shadow of a tomb" (92). To ask who is the master of the slave is like asking someone if he has stopped beating his wife. In language's realm of pure potentiality that, Shelley argues, reduces the familiar to "chaos," there are no slaves because there are no masters. To know this, however, is to inhabit "chaos" or the "Abysm" of pure potentiality. Demogorgon, who is pure potentiality, thus accurately replies:

> --If the Abysm
> Could vomit forth its secrets:--but a voice
> Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless.
>
> (2.4.114-16)

For Shelley (and, I would hazard, for de Man), the "positing power of language" as pure metaphoricity, not catachresis, is the presiding invisible presence of the positing power of death that, though this is not de Man's point, enters Shelley's final fragment at "the margin of the last manuscript page" now become the finished poem's opening lines:

> Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
> Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
> Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
>
> Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.

Death that comes swiftly in the very midst of the "triumph of life" is the life that pre-exists the triumph of "the master o'er the slave." It is what is always already present demanding with the voice of an insistent question that

> The painted veil, by those who were called life,
> Which mimicked as with colours idly spread,
> All men believed and hoped, [be] torn aside.

(Prometheus Unbound 3-4. 190-92)

Death is what is always already there whenever the "painted veil" is "torn aside" even as the "positing power of language" prior to phenomenal signification is always already there when figuration is "torn aside." For de Man the "accidental" is the way in which the non-phenomenal appears, disappears, reappears, as the phantasmagoric, metaphoric "many" that "change and pass,"

Like clouds in starlight widely spread,--
Like memory of music fled,--
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

(Hymn to Intellectual Beauty 9-12)

This "accidental dress" is, for de Man, entirely "accidental" because it is unrelated to the blind action of language's positing power. It is not only "fragile," it is "false." Though, for Shelley, figuration at this stage of his poetic development is a "grace," that is "dearer for its mystery," it is clearly, for de Man, a highly seductive temptress not "to be celebrated or denounced" (68) lest he become emotionally involved. Shelley's "grace" is the "blindness" of de Man's "insight." Since the greater the "insight" the greater the "blindness," the grace as the stone his construction rejected was surely to be expected as the rejection altogether worthy of it.

Shelley's greatest fear was the fear of incarnation, the fear that the phenomenal world as a figuration borrowed from death will become not death, which is an eternity of life, but a demonic parody of death like the Christian dogma of Incarnation. The ultimate torture inflicted upon the bound Prometheus by the Furies sent by Jupiter is the vision of himself as the crucified Christ hung forever, in the name of love, upon a cross. "Remit the anguish of that lighted stare," Prometheus cries,

Close those wan lips--let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood--it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death
So thy sick throes shake not with thy gore--
O horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse.

(1.597-605)

The horror of "the triumph of life," as a parody of death (that is, a parody of life), is that the sun of the opening lines of Shelley's final fragment "hastening to his task / Of glory and of good" becomes in the fragment "a cold glare," ["that lighted stare"] intenser than the noon / But icy cold, obscured with [] light" (77-78). The blank space in the manuscript Mary Shelley filled in with the adjective "blinding," de Man's word for any formulated position. De Man thus concludes his stunning "reading as

disfiguration" of Shelley's final fragment by saying: "To monumentalize this observation into a method of reading would be to regress from the rigor exhibited by Shelley which is exemplary precisely because it refuses to be generalized into a system" (69).

In Prometheus Unbound, lyric releases the drama from its otherwise monumentality, a "lighted stare." The dramatic form of this release occurs when Demogorgon, momentarily mistaken as he approaches Jupiter for Jupiter's only-begotten son, takes Jupiter from his "accidental" throne back to his eternal "abyss," which is the unbound realm of pure potentiality. What Shelley displays as incarnation is the unnatural arrest of pure potential. Thetis, in the act of Jupiter's impregnation cries,

> "Insufferable might!
> God! spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
> The penetrating presence; all my being,
> Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
> Into a dew of poison, is dissolved,
> Sinking through its foundations."
>
> (3.1.37-41)

This astonishing account of sexual intercourse as a figure of the creative act, an art work, for Shelley, growing in the artist's unconscious as an embryo in the womb of the mother, draws upon the myth of Semele who is consumed by fire when Jupiter was bound by an oath to lie with her in his own undisguised form. The child of that union was Dionysus, Shelley's figure of the poet's power that is "girt round with weakness." When in his Defence, Shelley speaks of "the poisonous waters that flow from death through life" (505), he is, as mythopoeia, addressing Jupiter's abuse of power as sperm begetting a son who will eternalize his reign. The misuse of power in Jupiter's rape of Thetis, itself the punishing trick of Hera, becomes, in the bewildering compounding of metaphor, the dissolution of Sabellus when bitten by the poisonous snake, Seps, while crossing the Numidian desert. Mythically enacted here, as it is throughout Shelley's lyrical drama that must be erased to be seen, is the literalization of potentiality into a "false and fragile glass."

"[E]ven then," Jupiter replies, erasing Thetis' "loathsome mask" in which she figures his unwanted penetration,

> Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
> Mightier than either--which unbodied now
> Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
> Waiting the incarnation.
>
> (3.1.43-46)

Having uttered another "poisonous" name "with which our youth is fed" (Hymn to Intellectual Beauty 53), Demogorgon, who is "imageless," appears before him in the momentary hallucination of his wanted son. The hallucinatory sound and sight of

Demogorgon's chariot whirling up Olympus as the obsessive, addictive chariot of life is, in his madness (de Man's "madness of words"), his only-begotten son emerging from Thetis's womb. "Hear ye the thunder," Jupiter cries,

> of the fiery wheels
> Griding the winds?--from Demogorgon's throne.--
> Victory! Victory! Feel'st thou not, O World,
> The Earthquake of his chariot thundering up
> Olympus?
>
> (3.1.47-51)

As Demogorgon in a stage note (a message from a hallucinatory vision written on a sick brain) "descends and moves toward the Throne of Jupiter, "Jupiter cries, "Awful Shape, what art thou? Speak!" Since Demogorgon can only speak in whatever idiom is addressed to it ("I spoke but as ye speak," it says to Asia in replying to her multiple, confusion-compounding questions that are finally violently interrupted with "Behold!"), Demogorgon replies:

> Eternity--demand no direr name.
> Descend, and follow me down the abyss;
> I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child,
> Mightier than thee; and we must dwell together
> Henceforth in darkness.--Lift thy lightnings not.
> The tyranny of Heaven none may retain,
> Or reassume, or hold succeeding thee ...
> Yet if thou wilt--as 'tis the destiny
> Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead-Put
> forth thy might.
>
> (3.1.52-61)

Crying "Ai! Ai!" as some final scattering of articulated sound, Jupiter takes down with him to the "bottomless void" the "wreck" of the "desolated world" that arose from the delusory combat of the "conqueror and the conquered" (3.1.72-79). The "chariot of life" with its blinded four-faced charioteer (the chariot whirling simultaneously in four directions going nowhere) is erased, becoming as chaos, the "bottomless void" of pure potentiality, "Ai! Ai!," like the "Of" on the final fold of Shelley's sheet, announcing as erasure the "positing power of language" yet again.

3. The Pathos of de Man

When de Man argues that "the positing power of language is both entirely arbitrary, in having a strength that cannot be reduced to necessity, and entirely inexorable in that there is no alternative to it," that "it stands beyond the polarities of chance and determination and can therefore be no part of a temporal sequence of events" (62-63), the presence of his argument is presumably present as an instance of a specular "Cogito" devoid of an "ergo sum," except perhaps as what de Man calls "an

unbearable condition of indeterminism." Cogito, for de Man, like the voice that narrates The Triumph of Life, is the passive spectator. "This voice," de Man explains, "does not question and does not share in their ["the figures of the narrator who interrogates Rousseau and of Rousseau who interrogates the shape"] predicament" (64). Their "predicament" is the predicament of "sum," a figure falsely hovering as a series of rhetorical questions. The ghostly presence of this figural "sum" as what de Man calls a "mutilated textual model" finds its "decisive textual articulation" in an "actual occurrence": "the actual death and subsequent disfigurement of Shelley's body" (66-67), a "defaced body" that serves as the non-hero of Shelley's "non-epic, non-religious poem" (63) for which "we have no name readily available among the familiar props of literary history" (44).

If, however, Shelley's "defaced body" is the non-hero of Shelley's non-named poem, de Man's "decisive textual articulation" (66) of it in a fragment in which it "is not present in its represented or articulated meaning" (67) fully justifies his notion that "language posits and language means (since it articulates) but language cannot posit meaning; it can only reiterate (or reflect) it in its reconfirmed falsehood" (64). A "defaced body" as the non-hero of a non-named poem confronts as no other "representation" can the falsehood of meaning. It exposes as "the wound of a fracture" the "impossible position" that, as he demonstrates in his close reading of The Triumph of Life, "is precisely the figure, the trope, metaphor as a violent--and not as a dark--light, a deadly Apollo" (64). The "deadly Apollo" resides in the metaphorical "shape all light" (352) that as "all light" has no "shape," whose "melody" is "oblivious spell" (331), whose "feet" (370) "thought by thought, / Trampled its fires into the dust of death" (387-88), whose "measure" (377) in de Man's account "separates from the phenomenal aspects of signification as a specular representation and stresses instead the literal and material aspects of language" (60). Metaphor, that is, cancels itself out and in the process language is restored to its "literal and material aspects." Shelley's "defaced body" brought from "the margin of the last manuscript page" and made by de Man "an inseparable part of the poem" is, as an "inseparable part," the product rather than the agent of "the positing power of language," an action to which, because of its sheer mindlessness, no value can be attached.

For Shelley, the restoration of language to its "literal and material aspects" is a return to the "Abysm" from which language as sound emerges, language as sound being its unactualized potential. Agreeing with Keats that the world is "`The vale of Soul-making'" (February 14-May 3, 1819), Shelley argues that the soul is "made" out of matter, which it converts to metaphor and remains metaphor so long as it remains in the world. Metaphor is in this sense "the literal and material" language of the soul upon which its consciousness of itself depends. This dependence upon metaphor continues until the soul's consciousness of itself is capable of sustaining itself without metaphor, at which point the soul is born out of matter like an embryo released from the womb to become what in itself it really is: "imageless." By "imageless," Shelley means, among other things, the soul's release from the body that as metaphor, as soulbody, constitutes a separate, individual identity described in Mont Blanc as

> my own separate phantasy,
> My own, my human mind, which passively
> Now renders and receives fast influencings,
> Holding an unremitting interchange
> With the clear universe of things around.
>
> (35-39)

Metaphor as soulbody is, for Shelley, a "separate phantasy" that may best be described as the self-conscious grammatical stage of a pure consciousness. "The words I, and you, and they," he writes,

> are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them. It is difficult to find terms adequately to express so subtle a conception as that to which the intellectual philosophy has conducted us. We are on the verge where words abandon us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of--how little we know. (On Life 478; my italics)

In the voiding of self-consciousness, pure consciousness emerges first as "the dark abyss of--how little we know" (Happy those for whom the folds / Of"). Dependent upon metaphoricity, this "dark abyss of--how little we know" becomes in Mont Blanc the ravine of Arve. Looking into it, the poet's brain becomes dizzy, and, by figuring the ravine as his brain, the ravine becomes the "Dizzy Ravine" (34). This dizziness induces "a trance sublime and strange" which is his "own separate phantasy," a metaphorical construct that is the brain's limited response to "the dark abyss of--how little we know" not unlike the "Vision" rolled on the narrator's brain in The Triumph of Life as he lay in "that trance of wondrous thought" (40-41). Because, however, the brain, even in the poet's "separate phantasy" of it, still holds "an unremitting interchange / With the clear universe of things around," it is, though "dizzy," not mad. So long as this double action that is metaphor continues, "separate phantasy" not erasing the "unremitting interchange," phantasy or metaphor as "the madness of words" stops short of "the madness" of the brain. Verbal madness need not be mental madness. In Mont Blanc, the poet is rescued from mental madness by the sheer unremittedness of the passive brain's "unremitting interchange / With the clear universe of things around" ("thou art there" [48], "Mont Blanc yet gleams on high" [127]), even as the narrator in The Triumph of Life is initially rescued by the fact that his "Vision" is "transparent" (31) rather than opaque; he can see through it to the "dawn" and the natural scene the dawn brings with it. For Shelley, the product of this double vision, inward and outward, is metaphor. Mont Blanc is not only "there," it is now there as a "thou" that has a "voice" to "repeal / Large codes of fraud and woe" (80-81). So long as the poet is concerned to repeal those codes, metaphor, in the service of "the One," remains the natural language of the soul. Once, however, he withdraws from social reform ("the world and its mysterious doom" [The Triumph of Life 244]), the soul having gained in the process a knowledge of itself as a self, metaphor as a binding that transforms the world must be abandoned to a state of pure

consciousness "where words abandon us." Shelley's final "Of" standing alone on an empty folded sheet is Shelley looking "down the dark abyss of--how little we know." The dizziness he experiences is a dizziness he as poet knew well, his actual drowning perhaps becoming a releasing, unmediated act of pure consciousness.

One of the most striking things about The Triumph of Life for de Man is the absence of pathos. "The Triumph of Life," he writes,

> differs entirely from such Promethean or titanic myths as Keats' Hyperion or even Paradise Lost which thrive on the agonistic pathos of dialectical battle. It is unimaginable that Shelley's non-epic, nonreligious poem would begin by elegiacally or rebelliously evoking the tragic defeat of former gods, the stars, at the hands of the sun. The text has no room for the tragedy of defeat or the victory among next-of-kin, or among gods and men. The previous occupants of the narrative space are expelled by decree, by the sheer power of utterance, and consequently at once forgotten. In the vocabulary of the poem, it occurs by imposition (1. 20), the emphatic mode of positing. This compresses the prosopopoeia of the personified sun, in the first lines of the poem, into a curiously absurd pseudo-description. The most continuous and gradual event in nature, the subtle gradations of the dawn, is collapsed into the brusk swiftness of a single moment. (63)

What de Man (as the prosopopoeia of a personified de Man?) here says of the dawn absurdly "collapsed into the brusk swiftness of a single moment" can equally be said about the pathos lodged in the first thirty-eight Spenserian stanzas of nine lines each, all of them carefully framed by the extra foot of the alexandrine, that, in Adonais, is "collapsed into the brusk swiftness of a single" line: "Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep" (342). The "agonistic pathos of a dialectical battle" is here collapsed with a swiftness that is outmatched by the fifty-third line of the first act of Prometheus Unbound: "Disdain? Ah no! I pity thee." As if stunned by the swiftness after "[t]hree thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours / And moments" (1.12-13), Prometheus, reconsidering the "I" that pities Jupiter, recasts it in terms of the sheer autonomy of the positing. Listening to the words of his curse repeated by the Phantasm of Jupiter, Prometheus says "it doth repent me" (1.303). The "I" does not posit; words alone posit. Prometheus has no control over words; words control him; "it" repents, not Prometheus. As a "lyrical" drama, the drama is controlled by the arbitrary and inexorable positing power of language, a power that reduces to oblivion the "spell" cast as figuration by the measured articulation of sound (Iris's dancing feet) that Shelley calls "incantation." "We hear," cries "a confused voice" hearing the voice of Demogorgon, "thy words waken Oblivion" (4.543). What remains, survives "Oblivion," is an allegory of reading that Demogorgon, who speaks "but as ye speak" (1.113), offers: "These are the spells by which to reassume / An empire o'er the disentangled Doom" (4.568-69). In short: "the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise, and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn" ("Shelley Disfigured" 68).

One reason, perhaps, that de Man is so struck by the absence of pathos in The

Triumph of Life is the lingering presence of an indeterminate pathos, the "ergo sum" that is the self or himself. Pathos ("I was overcome / By my own [untempered] heart alone" [241-42]) is the infirmity of shame as failure that still continues to haunt the shade of Rousseau. Pathos, in this sense, is the collusion of the "conquered" with the "conqueror." It is the continuing "triumph of life" in and as the affections, particularly an affection for oneself. It is what "still is dear" that "[a]ttracts to crush, repels to make thee wither" (Adonais 473-74). It is the refusal to "die" which is to say, embrace the non-phenomenality of the arbitrary and inexorable "positing power of language" that, as the "madness of words," is what the actual Shelley may have experienced when, still under the control of words, he folded his sheet and saw in his own hand on the blank white paper the pre-position "Of." As the sheer delusional figuration of "the positing power of language" always already humanly present, this becomes in Alastor the veiled maid as the figure of all figuration folding the Visionary "in her dissolving arms." "Now blankness veiled his dizzy eyes," writes the passive narrator unconsciously experiencing what writing is,

> and night
> Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
> Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
> Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.
>
> (187-91)

In the radical rewriting of Alastor, as well as of all his poems, that The Triumph of Life is, the Visionary joins the "mute music" (Keats's "unheard" melodies) of the "sacred few" in Silence's "rugged cell" (65-66). As a figuring of disfiguration, however, Silence's "rugged cell" cannot, rather than can, "be said to reduce all of Shelley's previous work to nought" ("Shelley Disfigured" 66).

In "A Defence of Rhetoric: The Triumph of Reading,"(9) Deborah Esch explores the pathos that haunts the sense of failure pervading what she rightly calls de Man's "postface, an afterward" (72) to The Rhetoric of Romanticism, a volume that collects essays written over a span of roughly twenty-five years, and, as Esch correctly suggests, is, like The Triumph of Life, a "body of work that presents itself to his retrospection [as] fragmentary to an extent that threatens the coherence of the whole" (72). Unlike The Rhetoric of Romanticism, however, the "fragmentary" nature of The Triumph of Life in no sense "threatens the coherence of the whole" because, as de Man brilliantly demonstrates in "Shelley Disfigured," the threat to coherence is not a threat at all; it is, rather, "the wound of a fracture that lies hidden in all texts," which becomes a human wound only if what figuration is (a wound) is not recognized for what it is: the phenomenal limitation of signification, of being mortal or human, in a word, of the "ergo sum." The pathos of de Man's "postface," rather than his "deface," resides in his lingering, pathos-infused, figuration of himself after exploring in essay after essay in the volume the radical defacement that language is prior (though not logically or temporally) to all signification. "Such massive evidence of the failure to make the various individual readings coalesce," de Man writes,

> is a somewhat melancholy spectacle. The fragmentary aspect of the whole is made more obvious still by the hypotactic manner that prevails in each of the essays taken in isolation, by the continued attempt, however ironized, to present a closed and linear argument. (viii; my italics)(10)

As if, like the shade of Rousseau, complaining about the mortal "stain" that he "disdains to wear," de Man continues a few pages on:

> I feel myself compelled to repeated frustration in a persistent attempt to write as if a dialectical summation were possible beyond the freaks and interruptions that the readings disclose. By stating the inevitability of fragmentation in a model that is itself fragmented, one restores the aesthetic unity of manner and substance that may well be what is in question in the historical study of romanticism. Such is the cost of discursive elegance, a small price to pay, perhaps, compared to the burden of constantly falling back to nought. (ix; my italics)

De Man, I suggest, is here in his postface "overcome / By [his] own heart alone, which neither age / Nor tears, nor infamy ... / Could temper to its object." The shade of Rousseau, being a shade, added "nor now the tomb." De Man brought the "tomb" of Shelley to his allegorical reading of reading The Triumph of Life. One wonders what the shade of de Man would contribute to this complaint, now that de Man's "defaced body" is "an inseparable part" of it, to make the "[w]hole" that absorbs his fragment into it. Was this--his own death which Shelley says we owe to life--the [w]hole he sought "beyond the breaks and interruptions that the readings disclose"? For de Man, the "positing power of language" present as "breaks and interruptions" brilliantly, rather than "glimmeringly" signified in his reading of reading The Triumph of Life, "stands beyond the polarities of chance and determination and can therefore not be part of a temporal sequence of events" (63). To stand "beyond the polarities," however, the Cogito, unlike Rousseau and the Greek philosophers to whom Rousseau compares himself, would have to be released from what de Man calls "a double structure held together by the connivance of words and deeds," a connivance that enslaves "to the eroding process of `life.'" To stand outside this eroding process, beyond the "polarities," one, de Man points out, would have to "exist singly, as pure mind" (48), the "Cogito" free of "ergo sum" that, better than any author I know, de Man helped me, against a lifetime of literary odds stacked against me, to understand. Though glimpsing, though only as a likeness, and in the knowledge that any likeness is false, that the arbitrary, inexorable non-phenomenal "positing power of language" is most like death, he could not confront death except as a figure like the four-faced shrouded charioteer of The Triumph of Life. Certainly, he could not know the reverse: the "positing power of language," though non-phenomenal, is the presiding figure of death. For Shelley, death, particularly in Adonais, is simultaneously the disfiguration of figuration and the figuration of disfiguration, the result of which is "Oblivion." Because de Man never, at least in print, fully subjected Adonais to his highly innovative mode of allegorical reading attempted here, Adonais remained for him what he called a "seductive grace."

The "grace" that is not seduction is, for Shelley, "the One" that "remains" when the "shape all light" with her dancing feet has trampled to fragments her "dome of many coloured glass." Oblivion, for Shelley, is the pure "Cogito," "pure mind,"(11) free of the "ergo sum." His actual death, I suggest, as it becomes in de Man's reading "an inseparable part" of The Triumph of Life, brought de Man closer to the "pure mind" (which Shelley called the "one mind") that the "double structure" of"life" falsely appears, as the phenomenal, to erode. It further clarified the unavoidable erosion that best describes why to read "is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat" (68). No "one" who reads the texts of Shelley's poems in this way can miss the "One" that is the full presence of the Cogito in the otherwise chaotic action of the brain that, by virtue of its "madness" or "chaos," vibrates as the mind's pure potential that is consciousness, the "One" becoming Shelley's final naming of his many figured disfigurations of the "one mind" that is mind itself.

4. Death as Release into Life

"The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind." To release these opening lines of Mont Blanc from what Shelley calls the "grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement" is to erase "the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them." The release of language (langue) from words (parole) is to restore words to language's "positing power" from which "dark abyss" of pure potentiality words emerge as the "many" that "change and pass" (in Shelley's thematization of deconstruction) from the "One" that "remains."

The "positing power of language" thematized by Shelley as "the One," released from words thematized as "the many," restores the opening lines to what as language they are before they become words:
"theeverlastinguniverseofthingsflowsthroughthemind." Jupiter's "Ai! Ai!," like Shelley's "Of," mirrors, as the action of language positing its power, this dissolution of words into their originating and unknowable source figured by Shelley (as his figure of disfiguration) as, among others, the "dark abyss," "abysm," "shoreless sea," "bottomless void," "Oblivion," "void circumference," "intense inane." "Words," Shelley remarks in his De, rice of Poetry, figure as a "temporary dress" or "accidental vesture" or "the alloy of costume, habit, etc." (487), what he calls (perhaps with Wordsworth's "vanishings" ["Immortality Ode" 144] in mind) "the vanishing apparitions that haunt the interlunations of life," "interlunations" being the blank darkness between the old and new moon when there appears to be no moon at all. The "vanishing apparitions" haunting absence to create the illusion of presence is, for Shelley, finally what figuration is.

By figuring as poetry or thematizing as thought what the unknowable "positing power of language" is, Shelley, no less than de Man, is allegorizing the unknowable, breaking the "Silence" like Christ breaking bread, so that it can be heard or eaten. The breaking is always a temporal interruption of the Silence that, as what de Man calls a "violent `springing forth'" (63), announces itself as an interruption, the ultimate interruption being death. For this reason, like Christ breaking bread as a figure of his own crucifixion, every interruption, every word interrupting the "Silence" is a pre-

figuring of death, though, as a pre-figuring, unveiling more about the unknowableness of death than de Man will allow. De Man's fundamental assumption of the accidental character of mind, consciousness, thought as they are grounded in, dependent upon, "the madness of words," a "madness" of which we are the "product" rather than the "agent," disallows all value to the fictions ("endless prosopopoeia") we make of this "madness." "What would be naive," he writes,

> is to believe that this strategy ["endless prosopopoeia"], which is not our strategy as subjects, since we are its product rather than its agent, can be a source of value and has to be celebrated or denounced accordingly. (68)

Using words, not in "the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them," but as "merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of one mind" (On Life 478), Shelley is able to read these "marks" for what they reveal about the "one mind." One thing they reveal is that as "marks" they are ceaselessly flowing as "the everlasting universe of things" through the "one mind," though they are, as "marks" or (to shift the figure, as "footsteps"), "like those of a wind over a sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only as the wrinkled sand which paves it" (Defence 504). More than that: these "marks" or "footsteps" subject to erasure, though leaving traces of their erasure, are imprinted as impressions on the brain to which accidental names are assigned, the names being the traces of the erasing impressions, "footsteps" or "marks." How they come to be named is suggested by Shelley when he asserts that "[m]an is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven" (Defence 480). Words are the internal forms of external impressions which, as a parody of the "One" tend to remain when the "many" external impressions have "changed and passed." When words remain, usurping the One, words as the ghosts of absent impressions act as if the external impressions were still present in them and as them. In The Triumph of Lye words are acting in precisely this `as if' way; Shelley's figure for them is "the million leaves of summer's bier" (51). In his Ode to the West Wind," they are figured within a figure, in Shelley's consistent mode of thematizing language, as "dead thoughts" become "withered leaves" (63-64). Though, as in The Triumph of Life, he begins his Ode by describing words as "[p]estilence-stricken multitudes," he sees, more clearly than in his final fragment, that, in calling upon the west wind to chariot them "to their dark wintry bed," he is also calling upon it to chariot

> The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
> Each like a corpse within its grave, until
> Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
>
> Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
> (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
> With living hues and odours plain and hill.
>
> (7-12)

The "defaced body" of Shelley, dug up by de Man and monumentally re-buried in the Fragment (de Man's "endless prosopopoeia"), is here a winged seed lying "like a corpse within its grave." To dig it up in the allegorical manner of de Man is for de Man to assume, as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein assumed, the role of the west wind's "azure sister of the Spring." The "madness of words" thus becomes in de Man's example of it the parodic assumption of nature itself, as if words transcended nature, an as if that de Man considered "madness." But were words really "mad" for Shelley?

For Shelley, I suggest, the madness of words lay in their fixedness and definiteness, in their rejection of their passing and changing, their refusal to be driven by the chariot of nature to "their dark wintry bed" where, having returned to "the positing power of language" they are awakened to new life. Only in words attempting to usurp language's "positing power" by assuming the power (imagination's "strength / Of usurpation"(12) [Prelude 6.659-60]) does Shelley see the operation of "the madness of words." For Shelley, the reality of words lay in their perpetual deconstruction of themselves, not in some assumed fixed identity more grammatical than real.

Shelley calls this consciousness of the ephemeral nature of words, like the ephemeral nature of "I, and you and they," the "one mind" through which "the everlasting universe of things" flows as its consciousness of itself, though not as its creator: mind as the perception of the universe of things, that is aware of itself as perceiver rather than creator. Wasserman thus sums up Shelley's "metaphoric definition of the universe" in terms of what Shelley called the "intellectual philosophy," a philosophy whose many parts, as Wasserman demonstrates, were borrowed from various sources, though, as a skeptical construct, it was uniquely Shelley's own:

> Uncreated and eternal, the universe is a river of" things," for mind can only perceive, not create; but what is asserted of the river is that it flows through the valley of mind, for everything exists only as it is perceived and therefore only as it is present in mind. By defining the universe as constituted of things rather than of thoughts and then by predicating the existence of those things exclusively in mind, Shelley formulated a syntax which, by fusing the externalizing subject (universe of things) and the internalizing predicate (flows through the mind), denies both that "things" are mental fictions and that there is any real distinction between thing and thought. (Shelley: A Critical Reading 222)

For Shelley, mind, as here described by Wasserman, "is not the individual mind but the One Mind, which constitutes total Existence ["the everlasting universe of things"] and of which each individual mind is a portion" (223). Individual mind as a "portion" of the "One Mind" is what Wasserman, with reference to Shelley, calls "awareness." "[A]wareness," he explains of Shelley, "not matter, is the stuff of which existences are formed, and their radical base is self-consciousness: `Nought is but that which feels itself to be' [Hellas 785]." Wasserman then continues: "Existence and mind are interchangeable terms in as much as mind is awareness of itself, its modifications, and its content; and Shelley can actually equate the two: `... the cause of mind, that is, of existence'" (139).

As an elaborate, endlessly shifting, figuration of the "awareness" of "existence," Shelley wished ultimately to avoid any agonistic dialectic between mind and matter as if they were contending realities when in fact reality itself, is their oneness as mind-matter, thought-thing. The "everlasting universe [one verse] of things" is a "universe of things" because it "flows through the [one] mind," not as words, but as the unending stream of "ever-spreading sound" accidentally becoming words without ceasing everlastingly to flow: "that great poem," as Shelley archetypally describes it, "which all poets, like the cooperating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world" (De, nee 493). The consciousness of this reality is, for Shelley, a consciousness of metaphor whose perpetual passing and changing allows no naming as meaning to be permanently attached to it.(13) Death is the ultimate assurance that this verbal curse imposed upon accidental impressions will be erased, allowing "the everlasting universe of things" to continue forever to flow. "Then what is Life?" The answer rising from the question (as, for Shelley, it lies buried within it) is "Death." Thus, when returning Urania's embrace of the dead Keats, Death in Adonais "rose and smiled, and met her vain caress," it is because Urania seeks to arrest Keats's words, "even so long as but a kiss may live" (227). Blake, like Shelley, knew better than to bind himself, to Urania:

> He who binds to himself, a joy
> Doth the winged life destroy
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in Eternitys sun rise.
>
> ("Several Questions Answerd" 1-4)

Death pervasively imaged in his poetry as "the winged life" is what, for Shelley, the figuration of disfiguration simultaneously thematizes and enacts.

5. De Man as Exorcist

By extending de Man's allegorical reading of The Triumph of Life to include an allegorical reading of Adonais (and to a lesser extent Alastor, Mont Blanc, Ode to the West Wind, and Prometheus Unbound) that fully acknowledges its indebtedness to de Man, I have attempted to suggest that de Man's completion of Shelley's final fragment in terms of its allegorical meaning is very different from my own. Drawing upon his translation of Plato's Ion and Symposium, Shelley in Adonais is able to distinguish between the divine unconsciousness (or "madness") of the Dionysian poet who "in mad trance, strike[s] with [his] spirit's knife / Invulnerable nothings" and the divine consciousness of the logocentric poet-philosopher who, by virtue of his logocentricity is progressively able to cast off the accumulating figurations of mythopoeia. The god who presides over a mythopoetic universe, Shelley writes in his translation of Ion,

> seems purposely to have deprived all poets, prophets, and soothsayers of every particle of reason and understanding, the better to adapt to their employment as his ministers and interpreters; and that we, their auditors,

> may acknowledge that those who write so beautifully, are possessed, and address us, inspired by the God.(14)

In Symposium, on the other hand, Socrates is able by means of logos as distinct from mythopoeia to liberate the mind from its enmeshment in figuration, which is its irrational possession by the gods. Through the uncontaminated power of logos the mind is conducted from the sensible to the supersensible, from things to the ideas imperfectly reflected in things, and from those ideas to the Idea of all ideas, which is the one mind's unmediated union with itself as a glowing, self-sustaining consciousness. Though, like Plato, Shelley could not describe this state of pure consciousness(15) as in itself it really is, he could, and did, again like Plato, describe in Adonais the negative way to it by casting off the superstitions that reside in the figurations that constitute for Shelley "the last clouds of cold mortality." For de Man these "last clouds" are the apostrophizing strategy of language of which we are the product rather than the agent, a strategy to which no value can be (or should be) assigned.

De Man's "blindness" to the autonomous operations of his own insightful mind, an autonomy that constitutes its logic, resides in his failure fully to perceive its autonomy, which is the mind's self-sustaining, self-regulating consciousness of itself] The operations of this consciousness, understood as the logical processes of thought, are, like the strategy that de Man attributes to words, not the agent of consciousness, but its product. Mind revolving in its own logical processes as its consciousness of itself sublates all that exists into thought. The imagination that Wordsworth describes as arising like "an unfather'd vapour" from "the mind's abyss" with a "strength / Of usurpation" that puts out "the light of sense.... marks," de Man argues, "a possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world, without being moved by an intent aimed at a part of this world"(16) This "possibility for ["intent of"] consciousness," however, remains forever a "possibility" or "intent" because, de Man argues, poetic words in romanticism, unlike natural objects, do not contain within themselves their own origination "determined by nothing but their own being" (67). "Unlike words, which originate like something else (`like flowers'), flowers," he continues,

> originate like themselves: they are literally what the are, definable without the assistance of metaphor. It would follow then, since the intent of the poetic word is to originate like the flower, that it strives to banish all metaphor, to become entirely literal. (68)

In The Triumph of Life, I suggest, Shelley's striving to "banish all metaphor" ("Figures ever new") as the recognized inability of a mediated consciousness to inhabit its unmediated nature resides in his de Manian recognition that "the positing power of language" denies words an ontological status. Only by banishing all metaphor can consciousness be released from the mediation of words to become what in itself consciousness really is. While de Man explored in considerable depth the ambiguous status of metaphor in the romantic and post-romantic periods, pointing,

among other instances, to Wordsworth's insistence "that the imagination can only come into full play when `the light of sense goes out' and when thought reaches a point at which it is `its own perfection and reward,'" he is left to wonder "about the kind of images that such an imagination would produce," knowing only "that they would have little in common with what we have come to expect from familiar metaphorical figures" (77). What, however, he fails to point out in quoting the passage from the 1805 Prelude, part of which Wordsworth later deleted, is that the imagination that puts out "the light of sense" at the same time and in the same act "lift[s] up itself / Before the eye and progress of my song" (6.525-26). The usurping power of imagination is the eye that opens onto and into the "progress of [his] song," described by Coleridge as an "Orphic song" of "passionate thoughts / To their own music chaunted" ("To William Wordsworth" 45-57). When his song is thus lifted up to what as poetic words ("puny boundaries" [2.218]) it cannot be, Wordsworth's imagination shows him as absent from what he is ironically progressing toward: a work that

> Not in a mystical and idle sense,
> But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
> Hath no beginning [and no end].
>
> (2.230-32)

Wordsworth's unmediated consciousness presides as an informing absence over the "puny boundaries" of his epic, those "puny boundaries" coming between the "progress of [his] song" and the steady imminence of its extinction.

"We are only beginning to understand," de Man concludes in "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image,"

> how the oscillation in the status of the image is linked to the crisis that leaves the poetry of today under a steady threat of extinction, although, on the other hand, it remains the depository of hopes that no other activity of the mind seems able to offer. (77)

De Man's recognition of "a steady threat of [poetry's] extinction" is a recognition of an unmediated consciousness that continues in de Man's case to seek comfort and hope in its mediated form even though his unmediated consciousness identifies the mediation with "madness." The supernal sanity capable of diagnosing a "madness" of such proportions belongs, I suggest, to an unmediated consciousness that de Man, confronted by, among other things, the "defaced body" of Shelley, chose to allegorize as a negative assurance, "thus awakening the suspicion that the negation is a Vereinung, an intended exorcism."

6. Madness, the Death of God, Romanticism, and Deconstruction

At the outset of this essay a connection was drawn between de Man's notion of "the madness of words" and Nietzsche's death of God. In The Gay Science, the death of God is announced by a madman "who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to

the market place, and cried incessantly, `I seek God! I seek God!'"(17) Scorned by those who did not believe in God, the madman "jumped into their midst and pierced them with his glances." "`Whither is God,' he cried."

> I shall tell you. We have killed him--you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all sums? Are we plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?.... Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose." (93)

Later in the essay I identified de Man's "positing power of language" with a "Cogito" completely separated from a "sum," there being no "ergo" to join them. The certainty and assurance of Descartes' "`I think, therefore I am,'" writes Derrida in "Cogito and the History of Madness," is "attained and ascertained within madness itself." "It is," he insists,

> valid even if I am mad--a supreme self-confidence that seems to require neither the exclusion or the circumventing of madness. Descartes never interns madness, neither at the stage of natural doubt nor at the stage of metaphysical doubt.(18)

Derrida's essay offers a critique of Foucault's Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, a critique arising partly out of the fact that as a student of Foucault he had in his class inhabited an "unhappy consciousness" in which he conducted an "interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple" (31). The silence of the dialogue lay, at least in part, in the linking of madness to silence, "the history of madness itself" being for Derrida as for Foucault "the archaeology of a silence" (35)Derrida listened to the "silence" in Foucault's lectures as one listening to the "madness" that has been stifled by "the annexation of the totality of language--and of the right to language--by psychiatric reason as the delegate of societal and governmental reason" (34). He listened to the stifled madness in Foucault's "language of reason" (34). He listened to the silence Foucault "sometimes" (34) in his History of Madness was able to describe: "`words without language'" or "`without the voice of a subject,'" "`obstinate murmur of a language that speaks by itself, without speaker or interlocutor, piled up upon itself, strangulated, collapsing before reaching the stage of formulation, quietly returning to the silence from which it never departed. The calcinated root of meaning'" (34-35).

Listening to the silence in the lectures, conducting "an interminable and silent dialogue" with it, Derrida confronted his own "madness" stifled by reason sufficiently to recognize what in the public domain he, like Foucault, was doing. "I philosophize only in terror," he writes, "but in the confessed terror of going mad. The confession is simultaneously, at its present moment, oblivion and unveiling, protection and

exposure: economy" (62). Derrida concludes his essay by expressing his "gratitude" (61) to Foucault by affirming that silence which "keeps within itself the trace of a violence" is not "the antagonist" of saying, "but rather the condition for it" (62). To the degree that "philosophy tranquilizes itself and excludes madness," Derrida concludes, "philosophy also betrays itself (or betrays itself as thought), enters into a crisis and a forgetting of itself that is an essential and necessary period of its movement" (61). For Derrida, as for de Man and Foucault, each in his own way, that "essential and necessary period" is over. What remains is the recognition that "reason is madder than madness--for reason is non-meaning and oblivion--and . . . madness is more rational than sense, for it is closer to the wellspring of sense, however silent or murmuring" (62). For Derrida, this recognition is "classic . . . not so in the sense of the classical age but in the sense of eternal and essential classicism" (62).

What finally distinguishes de Man from Derrida and Foucault is his way of handling the "terror of going mad," a "terror" to which he, unlike Derrida, never confesses. Instead, he resorts to what he suspects is "a Verneinung, an intended exorcism." And what finally distinguishes all three from Shelley and romanticism is the romantic linking of madness, above all "the madness of words," to the death of the soul. Keats building "a fane" to Psyche "[i]n some untrodden region of my mind" (Ode to Psyche 50), becoming as poet her priest, is conscious of the fact that such worship is "too late for antique vows, / Too, too late for the fond believing lyre" (36-37). It must begin again in the untrodden regions of the mind banished as "madness" by Foucault's age of reason, those untrodden regions being the unconscious that de Man conspicuously ignores. Nietzsche's death of God is the death of the soul, is madness. Sanity resides, for Keats as for romanticism, not in Urania's attempt to revive the corpse of a dead poet at least "so long but as a kiss may live," but in the far more strenuous act of "Soul-making." Figuration as "Soul-making" is not madness except for those who are fully resigned to the death of the soul and can see in its fantasized revival nothing more than "Medea's wondrous alchemy" or an exorcism of some archaic apparitions of soul the rationalism of which is "madder than madness." This recognition of soul that in Keats's reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass confronts him, in the midst of the thoughtless lust of its hero, "on a sudden, fainting with surprise" (7) is, I suggest, romantic, not in the sense of the romantic age, but in the sense of eternal and essential romanticism, lust becoming "the warm Love" (67) that the figurative making of Psyche lets in.

(1.) Unless otherwise noted, all references to de Man are taken from "Shelley Disfigured" in Deconstruction & Criticism (New York: Continuum, 1979). All references to Shelley's poetry and prose are taken from Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977). All references to Wordsworth's poetry are taken from The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed. T. Hutchinson, revised E. De Selincourt (London: Oxford UP, 1960). The reference to Blake's poetry is taken from The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary Harold Bloom (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982). The reference to Coleridge is taken from Biographia Literaria, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983). The reference to Keats's poetry is

taken from The Poetry of John Keats, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978).

(2.) "Monstrosity, Illegibility, Denegation: De Man, bp Nichol, and the Resistance to Postmodernism" in Monster Theory: Reading Culture, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1966) 41.

(3.) For an interesting mystical understanding of the Word ("Be") positing a creation ("It Is") as distinct from erasing it, one can turn to the Koran in which for not less than twenty-one years the archangel Gabriel dictated to the illiterate Muhammad in a series of trance-like states. In this divine dictation, utterance as the sperm of creation ("Recite [iqra] in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created--created man out of germ-cell!" [96:1]) is continuously being scattered so that introducing several of the one hundred and fourteen "surih" or chapters are certain disconnected letters (Alif, Lam, Mim) that, as a violent, unpredicated "starting forth" (like the "Of" with which The Triumph of Life breaks off, leaving the pre-position "Of" isolated on a single folded sheet), announce Judgment and Resurrection, a return to the beginning of all things which is, in the Koran, what each and every Blakean "Pulsation of the Artery" (Milton 29 [31]:3) is. In the Koran, every letter and word is, like de Man's "positing power of language," an arbitrary act completely independent of any narrative sequence, isolated in its occurrence by the arbitrary operations of Allah as opposed to de Man's "blind force" (65).

(4.) De Man's description of the "madness of words" as "the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn" (68) is a "madness" perhaps first subjected to a thorough psychological investigation in Theodore Flournoy's From India to the Planet Mars: A Study of A Case of Somnambulism with Glossolalia, ed. Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994). Flournoy's study was, like Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, first published in 1899 and was initially far more positively received than Freud's work. With the help of his friend, Ferdinand de Saussure, Flournoy was able to conclude that the glossolalia arising from the somnabulism or "subliminal imagination" of the entranced medium to produce a Martian romance demonstrated, however "mad," a system of identifiable signs ("semiotic") that were combined in utterance to produce meanings ("semantic"). Pointing out that, in our "endless prosopopoeia" (giving a voice to the absent or dead), "which is not our strategy as subjects, since we are its product rather than its agent," "it would be naive" to believe that its meaning "can be a source of value," de Man comes to much the same conclusion (and again with the aid of Saussure) that Flournoy reached in his pioneer study, though, unlike Flournoy, he does not explore the psychogenesis of the "madness of words" as they function autonomously as a "positing power" in a "subliminal" realm. Indeed, his avoidance of, or blindness before, any psychological reading of his own reading limits his understanding of romanticism. He ignores entirely the fact that, for the romantic, metaphor is the literal language of the psyche. The frustrated desire he sees at work in romanticism to render the metaphorical literal is a materialistic misreading of romanticism that rejects as fantasy the very notion of soul.

(5.) Shelley: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1971) 462-772

(6.) "Adonais" in The Subtler Language (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1959) 360.

(7.) "[A] certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound" (Defence 484) governs, for Shelley, poetic thought. Without it, thought would be dead. For de Man, on the other hand, recurrence of sound induces oblivion ("the `silver music' of oblivion" [54]) rather than living thought. To attribute meaning to "measure" or "feet" in poetry is to embrace "the madness of words." Shelley locates a "uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound" in what he calls "internal impressions" (480) that are quickened and "driven" by "the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" (504). When, in Adonais, he describes the poet "in mad trance, strik[ing] with his spirit's knife / Invulnerable nothings," it would appear that he is weary of, physically exhausted by, these interpenetrations which, as figurations, disfigure the "deep truth" that is "imageless." Relocating himself in death as distinct from life, figuration becomes for him "an unprofitable strife" with "phantoms" (346-48). This "unprofitable strife" is the "strife" from which, as what de Man calls "the agonistic pathos of dialectical battle" (63), Shelley's narrator figure in The Triumph of Life has withdrawn. To withdraw, however, is, for de Man, to be erased or defaced by language's positing power. The "defaced body" of Shelley is, for de Man, the "product" of language. Shelley, as poet, drowns in figuration and is then cremated by language's positing power figured as "the fire for which all thirst" that consumes "the last clouds of cold mortality" (Adonais 485-86). For de Man, the "positing power of language" is the mindless power of death understood as mere extinction that figuration induces us by "endless prosopopoeia" to forget.

(8.) Quoted in "Monstrosity, Illegibility, Denegation" 41.

(9.) Reading de Man Reading, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989) 77.

(10.) The Rhetoric of Romanticism (New York: Columbia UP, 1984).

(11.) For de Man, "pure mind" becomes, within "a neo-platonic Christian tradition," a "fitting symbol for the Incarnation," the birth of God "out of a transcendental realm into a finite world" (50). Shelley, of course, strenuously opposed the dogma of Incarnation as the tyranny of a fixated figure. Such a "birth," de Man rightly argues, "is precisely what the experience of forgetting in The Triumph of Life is not. What one forgets here is not some previous condition, for the line of demarcation between the two conditions is so unclear, the distinction between the forgotten and the remembered so unlike the distinction between the two well-defined areas, that we have no assurance whatever that the forgotten ever existed" (50). ("I asked [Wittgenstein] to admit that there was not a rhinoceros in the room, but he wouldn't," Bertrand Russell confessed.)

For Shelley, incarnation is forever "waiting" (Prometheus Unbound 3-1.46) in figuration to take possession of the mind placed under the "curse which binds us to be subjected to" figuration (Defence 505), now become a "loathsome mask." There is, then, for Shelley as for de Man, a perpetual "riddle" at work in figuration that de Man

believes remains "unresolved," left only "to haunt him [the reader]" (44-45). The reader, for de Man (who is the reader), is left in this condition because, I suggest, however frustrated he declares himself to be, he cannot reach "a dialectical summation ... beyond the breaks and interruptions that [his] readings disclose" (ix). He writes, he confesses, "as if a dialectical summation were possible" (ix; my italics). This state of what he calls in "Shelley Disfigured" a haunted state of "unresolved riddles" allows him, by way of compensation, to restore ("one restores") "the aesthetic unity of manner and substance" (ix). It is precisely this "aesthetic unity," beautifully analyzed, for example, by Earl Wasserman in his analysis of the aesthetic unity of Adonais, that Shelley, acting as the product of language ("it doth repent me"), ultimately rejects. De Man remains bound to "unresolved riddles" because he remained (past tense) bound to the aesthetic.

(12.) Wordsworth figures the imagination as an "awful Power" that arises "from the mind's abyss / Like an unfathered vapor that enwraps / At once, some lonely traveler." Enwrapt in this "vapor," he is at once "lost, / Halted without an effort to break through," and found. He discovers his "destiny," his "being's heart and home" in the "usurpation" that puts out "the light of sense" to reveal "in a flash" the "invisible world" (Prelude 6.592-602). For Shelley, the imagination, except as madness (de Man's "madness of words"), does not erase the sensible; it rearranges or recombines "the everlasting universe of things" that "[f]lows through the mind" into new or "before unapprehended relations of things" (Defence 482), and, by so doing, "creates anew ["marks" (482)] the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration" (Defence 505-6). Shelley, like Keats in his notion of Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime," has an "awful doubt" (Mont Blanc 77) about Wordsworth's recognition of his "being's heart and home."

(13.) Particularly in the added fourth act of Prometheus Unbound. Shelley makes it clear that he is ultimately as a lyric poet more interested in sound than in words, more concerned with "the incantation of this verse" that alone can "quicken" and "scatter" his otherwise "dead thoughts" (Ode to the West Wind 63-66). Thus in this added act the everlasting universe of things that flows through the one mind becomes "the deep music of the rolling world / Kindling within the strings of the waved air / Aeolian modulations," every pause filled with "under-notes" that "pierce the sense and Jive within the soul" (4.186-91). Here the "undernotes" are in sharp contrast to the piercing in the first act, where the notes, as the nails that bind Prometheus, merely torture the flesh and leave the soul lifeless. To argue, as de Man argues, that whatever is superimposed as living on this dead world over which, in this particular instance, a nailed Prometheus presides as the corpse of Shelley presides over the fragment of The Triumph of Life, is merely "the endless prosopopoeia" arising from "the madness of words" is to posit as dead the so-called living world, its livingness residing in its madness allegorized. I therefore suggest that de Man's assumption of the "positing power of language" is at its psychological source (ignored by de Man) de Man's positing of a life that cancels itself out in the very act of its positing. At its psychological source, it is Freud's Thanatos asserting itself as the Reality principle that the "madness of words" would convert to pleasure. The power of de Man is the

power of Thanatos that identifies the voice of poetry with a speaking corpse. In this sense, de Man personifies Shelley's imagined God of Catastrophism who, in the added act of Prometheus Unbound declares "Be not" (4.318).

(14.) The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, Julian Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928) 7: 198.

(15.) "I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in the future," Plato writes in his seventh Epistle,

> for there is no way of putting it into words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance or instruction in the subject itself and of close acquaintance when suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining. (341 C-D)

Plato's self-sustaining blaze generated in the soul is Shelley's "fire for which all thirst" that consumes "the last clouds of cold mortality."

(16.) "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image" in Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970) 76-77.

(17.) The Portable Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1984) 93.

(18.) Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) 34.

ROSS WOODMAN
University of Western Ontario, Canada

ROSS WOODMAN is Professor Emeritus of English in the Department of English at the University of Western Ontario. He is the author of The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley and numerous articles on the romantic poets, eight of which have appeared in SiR. He has been honored in a book edited by Douglas Kneale entitled The Mind in Creation: Essays in Honour of Ross Woodman, and in 1993 he received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Keats-Shelley Association of America. He is at present preparing a volume of essays on the romantics consisting of some earlier published papers and some new ones. The proposed title of the volume is "Poetry and Madness."